



January 13, 2022

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland:

First of all, we want to thank you for your recent address to the nation regarding accountability and voter protection. Your remarks could not have been timelier in light of recent unprecedented efforts to deny eligible voters access to the ballot box. We are sending this letter to request that the Department of Justice help protect the security of our electoral process in our home state of Florida. Recent reports are disturbing, and we believe these reports demonstrate a clear and convincing pattern of relentless attempts at voter suppression. In separate but concerning cases, multiple individuals were charged with falsifying voter registration claims and illegally casting ballots in the 2020 federal election.

Unfortunately, Florida has seen a disturbing rise in partisan efforts at voter suppression. Proposed legislation would further criminalize standard "get out the vote" practices, making it a criminal act to, for example, notify a homebound voter of his or her option to request a mail-in ballot.¹ In addition, there is a shameful attempt to reduce the number of drop boxes, particularly in certain precincts, and finally, the imposition of new deadlines on election supervisors to "clean voting rolls," an all too familiar strategy to purge voters of color throughout the country. Typically, under the Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, these proposals would be subject to preclearance.² But following the Supreme Court's decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, partisan actors in Florida have been unleashed to push legislation that restricts voting rights for political gain.

And while voter suppression efforts are ongoing, we are also extremely concerned that investigations into voting integrity are being politicized.

¹ Wendy Rhodes, *DeSantis says he wants to create a state office to investigate and prosecute election crimes*, HERALD-TRIBUNE, November 3, 2021, <https://www.heraldtribune.com/story/news/politics/state/2021/11/03/desantis-slams-big-tech-and-vaccine-mask-mandates-west-palm-rally/6268452001/>.

² About Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, *US Department of Justice*, <https://www.justice.gov/crt/about-section-5-voting-rights-act>.

In recent months, four individuals have been arrested in the Villages, a planned community in North Central Florida, for voter fraud.³ These individuals have been charged with voting multiple times, usually in Florida, but also in other states where they hold residency.

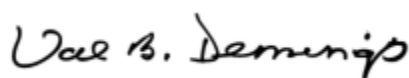
In early December, a woman from Clermont, Florida pleaded "no contest" to 10 counts of submitting false voter registration information ahead of the 2020 presidential primary election.⁴ The woman was arrested after the Lake County Supervisor of Elections discovered 119 voter registration applications that appeared to be fraudulent. Another woman in South Florida recently discovered that her party affiliation was changed, from Democratic to Republican, without her consent.⁵ And finally, two men were recently arrested in Jacksonville, Florida, on charges of criminal use of personal identification information, after at least 60 voter registration applications were filed under the names of people who did not give authorization or were deceased.⁶

Let's be clear: the crimes described above are examples of the system working because these individuals were caught and held accountable. These criminal acts were identified through the diligent work of local election officials with strong records of efficient, transparent, and lawful election facilitation.

Unfortunately, state officials in Florida are instead working to politicize our elections, blur existing lines of authority, and hamper the ability of local election officials to properly administer elections. Harmful proposals to create new partisan bodies to oversee our voting process are exactly the kind of action that demand oversight as we work to ensure that our voting process is unquestionably trustworthy. We believe that there must be a complete and thorough investigation by the Department of Justice to identify and stop any other patterns of voter suppression that threaten the integrity of our electoral process in the state of Florida.

Our republic depends on the integrity of our electoral process and every American deserves to know that, regardless of election outcomes, the process was free and fair. We look forward to your response.

Thank you,



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MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Kathy Castor
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Charlie Crist
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³ Mike DeForest, *4th resident of the Villages arrested for allegedly casting multiple ballots*, CLICKORANDO.COM, January 4, 2022, <https://www.clickorlando.com/news/local/2022/01/05/4th-resident-of-the-villages-arrested-for-allegedly-casting-multiple-ballots/>.

⁴ Mike DeForest, *Clermont woman pleads no contest to submitting false voter records*, CLICKORANDO.COM, December 8, 2021, <https://www.clickorlando.com/news/local/2021/12/08/clermont-woman-pleads-no-contest-to-submitting-false-voter-records/>.

⁵ Glenna Milberg, *Was a Little Havana 84-year-old lifelong Democrat duped into registering as a Republican?*, LOCAL10.COM, December 3, 2021, <https://www.local10.com/news/politics/2021/12/03/was-a-little-havana-84-year-old-lifelong-democrat-duped-into-registering-as-a-republican/>.

⁶ Dan Scanlon, *Jacksonville men charged with falsifying voter registration forms*, FLORIDA-TIMES UNION, November 24, 2021, <https://www.jacksonville.com/story/news/crime/2021/11/24/two-jacksonville-men-charged-falsifying-voter-registration-forms/8752645002/>.



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